Comprehensive Pre-deployment Evaluation Principles

The design of a comprehensive health screening tool for emergency responders is a challenging task that requires a customized risk assessment of the duties and responsibilities of the responder. It must take into consideration the specific anticipated work activities, working conditions, and work settings in which a responder is expected to perform. For this reason, it is not practical to design a comprehensive screening tool that is appropriate for a wide range of emergency personnel. Instead, this document provides a list of the general issues that should be addressed when determining the need for comprehensive screening of an emergency responder. It then provides examples of comprehensive evaluation questionnaires that are currently used by certain high-risk emergency responder groups.

Comprehensive medical screening should include a complete medical history and review of systems, a physical examination, and, in some instances, laboratory testing, as indicated by clinical judgment and good occupational medical practice. Pre-deployment biological monitoring for exposure to hazardous chemicals is not generally recommended. Such monitoring is not practical for unanticipated exposures to hazardous chemicals. When exposures to specific chemical agents are predictable, workers should be adequately protected. However, there may be some limited instances in which obtaining baseline clinical specimens before deployment for work in environments with predictable exposures may be helpful in subsequently assessing whether the protections used during this work are adequate and performing as intended.

The following are examples of the types of issues that should be considered when determining the need for comprehensive medical screening.

1. Response Settings and Conditions
    - Austere settings (temperature stress, no or limited electricity and few services/supplies)
    - Disaster zone settings (physical hazards, contaminated floodwaters, infectious vectors)
    - Hazardous materials release or uncharacterized and complex exposure zones (industrial explosions, major structural collapses, commercial transportation crash)
    - Radiation or nuclear contamination settings
    - Long work hours
    - Inconsistent opportunities for rest and nutrition
2. Response Tasks
    - Heavy lifting or physical exertion
    - Hazardous duty requiring use of heavy or cumbersome protective equipment
    - Respiratory protection requirements
3. Personal Risk Factors
    - Chronic illness, degree of medical control, and ability to maintain that control in the field setting; degree of vulnerability or risk of exacerbation given field settings and resources
    - Drug allergies, particularly to medications used for post-exposure prophylaxis for bio-terror agents; food allergies
    - Recent injury and likelihood of repeat injury or unexplained fatigue
    - Care, maintenance, and mobility requirements for durable medical equipment or assistance animals; ability to evacuate

An example of a well-established comprehensive evaluation can be found in the USCG Medical Manual

CIM 6000.1C at: http://www.uscg.mil/directives/listing_cim.asp?id=6000-6999